



## STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF STATE BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT

MICHAEL F. EASLEY  
GOVERNOR

DAVID T. MCCOY  
STATE BUDGET DIRECTOR

### **LUCA Challenges and Successes**

I would like to thank Chairman Clay and the members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to be a part of today's hearing.

I have worked with census data through the State Data Center partnership since the 1990 Census, and I have seen the demand for accurate and timely socio-economic data for small geographic areas increase at an enormous rate in that time. Users have moved from browsing for data in large printed census volumes to browsing the Internet and disc products. A large part of this increase in demand has been the growth of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that transpose figures into maps showing the impact of change in our communities. The US Census Bureau has recognized these changes in demand and use and has produced data in different formats, including TIGER Line products for mapping capability. While this growth and change has not happened without complications, the US Census Bureau is to be complemented on having been proactive in facing new needs and challenges.

In preparation for the 2010 Census, the US Census Bureau selected 2 dress rehearsal sites to test operations planned for the decennial census. One of these dress rehearsal sites was Fayetteville, NC, including 9 counties. This area was selected because of the diversity of population, presence of a military base, mix of urban and rural areas, and other factors that have made this area difficult to enumerate. A dress rehearsal of the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program was held in this area from June to October, 2006. I have been asked to comment on the successes and challenges of this LUCA dress rehearsal today.

The decennial census functions by getting questionnaires to the people and having the public respond to the questionnaires. It is necessary to know where people live to get the questionnaires to them. The US Census Bureau maintains a Master Address File (MAF) that is updated regularly with information from the US Postal Service, Internal Revenue Service, and surveys; however, addresses continue to be missed or incorrectly reported. This leads to less accurate data collection during the census. The LUCA program involves local governments in verifying and updating the MAF for their areas. Including the local experts in this verification process establishes a partnership that benefits everyone, but communication and promotion issues have caused some problems.

The Census Bureau mailed LUCA information and invitation-to-participate letters to the highest elected officials of each jurisdiction and to other key persons. The intention of these letters is to inform local officials of the LUCA program, invite them to a promotional workshop where the program can be discussed, and have the local officials

designate a liaison to coordinate the address verification process. Nearly all local governments' representatives who attend promotional workshops participate in LUCA in some way. However, the highest elected officials in the larger communities are often very busy, and in the smaller communities, the municipal offices operate on abbreviated business schedules. The information and invitation letters may have been misplaced, delivered to incorrect mailing addresses, or ignored by officials who do not understand the value or impact of the LUCA program. In the LUCA dress rehearsal in North Carolina, the Census Regional Office in Charlotte maintained good communication with me to get the latest list of local officials and their mailing addresses and to contact those local governments who did not respond to the mailings or who chose not to participate in the LUCA program. This gave me the opportunity to follow up with the non-response local governments with a phone call to discuss and promote LUCA participation. While some local government staff may have worked with LUCA for Census 2000, most elected officials were not in office then and were not familiar with the program. Key to the success of the LUCA program is communication with the officials, as well as education and promotion about the impact of LUCA on their communities through better data from the decennial census and the American Community Survey. The invitation and promotional letters were a good step in establishing "buy-in" from local leaders, but to improve participation even farther, the Census Bureau should utilize local resources, such as State Data Centers or Governor's Offices, to stress the local importance of participation. Establishing a strong communication base for LUCA improves participation.

The Census Bureau invited state governments to participate in LUCA for the dress rehearsal and for the 2010 Census. The state government of North Carolina participated in the LUCA dress rehearsal and will verify addresses as possible in the 2010 LUCA program. While state government participation adds another layer of verification to the MAF, the strength of state government participation is in improving communication and promoting participation between local governments and the Census Bureau and in creating participation partnerships among local governments. Small local governments may lack the resources to verify their address lists, but they are willing to help their county government verify addresses in their communities. State government LUCA participation will be served by allowing a longer review period at the end of the local government participation cycle, which will facilitate the state's targeting of those areas that are not being verified by local governments.

Many local governments felt that LUCA was an additional task handed to them by the federal government on top of their already full workload, and they were not willing to participate. North Carolina spent time promoting LUCA participation as an investment in the future of our communities. Lack of participation would hurt our communities with flawed planning information for the next decade. This approach received a positive response, but communicating that message to a 9 county area was time consuming in a LUCA process that is time sensitive. Early promotional material from the Census Bureau highlighting the long-term impact of LUCA may improve timely participation.

Joint promotional and technical training workshops were held in the dress rehearsal areas. The promotional part of the workshop is targeted to the elected officials, and the technical training is aimed at the people actually verifying the addresses. Joint workshops guaranteed that some part of the audience was uninterested. The promotional and technical training should be separate.

Many local government workers who planned to work with the LUCA verification process complained that the Census Bureau maps were less accurate than their local

planning maps, and therefore their LUCA participation was flawed from the outset. Partners from the Regional Census Office and North Carolina's state government discussed the MAF/TIGER Accuracy Improvement Project (MTAIP) conducted by the US Census Bureau to improve centerline accuracy on its map products with the local governments. Improving these census map products had a positive impact on participation in LUCA.

Local governments participating in LUCA frequently had technical questions and difficulty in submitting their LUCA responses in the correct format for the Census Bureau. During the LUCA dress rehearsal, technical support was available only by calling the Census Regional Office. Additional telephone support for technical questions will improve the quality of LUCA responses. MAF/TIGER Partnership Software was under development during the dress rehearsal but was not available for use. During LUCA 2010 promotion workshops held in North Carolina from February through May 2007, the MAF/TIGER Partnership Software was still not available. For local governments that are willing to participate in LUCA, the tools and training must be made available to them.

The open house for the Fayetteville Field Office on April 12, 2007 was well promoted and attended by local leaders and the media. This event could have been even more successful if held earlier in the LUCA cycle. Local elected officials could have become better informed on census operations before the majority of the promotional workshops had passed and this may have improved participation rates.

North Carolina is growing rapidly, and accurate data is important in planning for the needs and future of our communities. As the Governor's Census Liaison for North Carolina and a member of the State Data Center lead agency, I appreciate the efforts the US Census Bureau is making to collect, tabulate, and provide these data, and especially the outstanding service and support of Wayne Hatcher and the staff of the Census Regional Office in Charlotte, North Carolina. I hope this subcommittee and the federal government will support the US Census Bureau in providing data that serves all Americans. North Carolina is committed to working with the US Census Bureau in making the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey successful. Thank you for your invitation to be here today.